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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 001857

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/PDA (OHILTON); WHA/CEN

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TAGS: [OTIP](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON DRUGS, AUGUST 4, 2003

¶1. Op-ed by Marlin Oscar Avila in Tegucigalpa-based moderate daily "El Heraldo" on 8/2 entitled "Drug trafficking and corruption". "Drug trafficking has never been a secret in Honduras. The considerable rise of organized crime can only occur the way it has up to now with the complicity of the authorities, not only from the police but also from the country's powerful elites. The increase in drug production and trafficking has grown even more with the predominance of free markets in our globalized world."

"In Central America, we have doubts about the credibility of our authorities, particularly our Congressmen, who have been accused of being involved with international drug trafficking networks. However, the people's doubts are not limited to the Congressmen who are now detained for their apparent participation in this dirty business. They have reached the belief that some electoral campaigns have been financed with dirty or laundered money coming from private banks or other sources."

"The recent hits against organized crime, both in Nicaragua and Honduras, have given us a little hope that things may improve in favor of our democracy. There's no doubt that Nicaraguan President Enrique Bolanos is making a commendable effort to fight corruption. Also, President Maduro is having some success against the cocaine cartels, even though in the struggle against corruption, we can't say he's been successful so far."

¶1. Article in Tegucigalpa-based moderate daily "El Heraldo" on 8/4 entitled "Honduras requests helicopters". "The Honduran Minister of Defense Federico Breve stated, 'The US must acknowledge that Honduras is fighting drug trafficking, thus it should provide more logistical support including the donation of helicopters. At the beginning of the Maduro administration, the US offered six helicopters, but Honduras had to pay US\$ 4.1 million for them. We need them urgently, but we just can't pay for them'."

"Breve added, 'I think we are demonstrating our determination with everything we've done this year, for instance, the quantity of cocaine we've seized this year is really a record for Honduras. This is commendable, and I believe it has to be acknowledged by the US'."

Pierce